



Spotlight on Socratic Seminars: Exceptional Learning Opportunities

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How Rich is Your Classroom Discourse?

- Divergent Responses
- Multiple answers/explanations possible
- Students co-construct, drive, and often lead discourse
- Students build on, challenge, revoice, and share ideas with peers
- Many students eagerly participate
- Goal is to have students articulate strategic thinking
- (Quoted from article in **AMLE Magazine**, November 2014: *How Rich is Your Classroom Discourse?* By Jelani Jabari)



21st-Century Critical Thinkers

- Possess Open Mind
- Engage in Problem Solving
- Analyze, Reason, and Evaluate
- Collaborate with Others
- Reflect on Learning
- Make Real-World Applications
- Think Critically and Creatively
- Communicate Clearly and Accurately
- (Quoted from Critical Thinking for Life! By Mentoring Minds, 2013)



Top Skills and Qualities Employers Want in their Class of 2013 Recruits

- Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
- Ability to work in team structure
- Ability to make decisions and solve problems
- Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
- Ability to obtain and process information
- (Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2012)

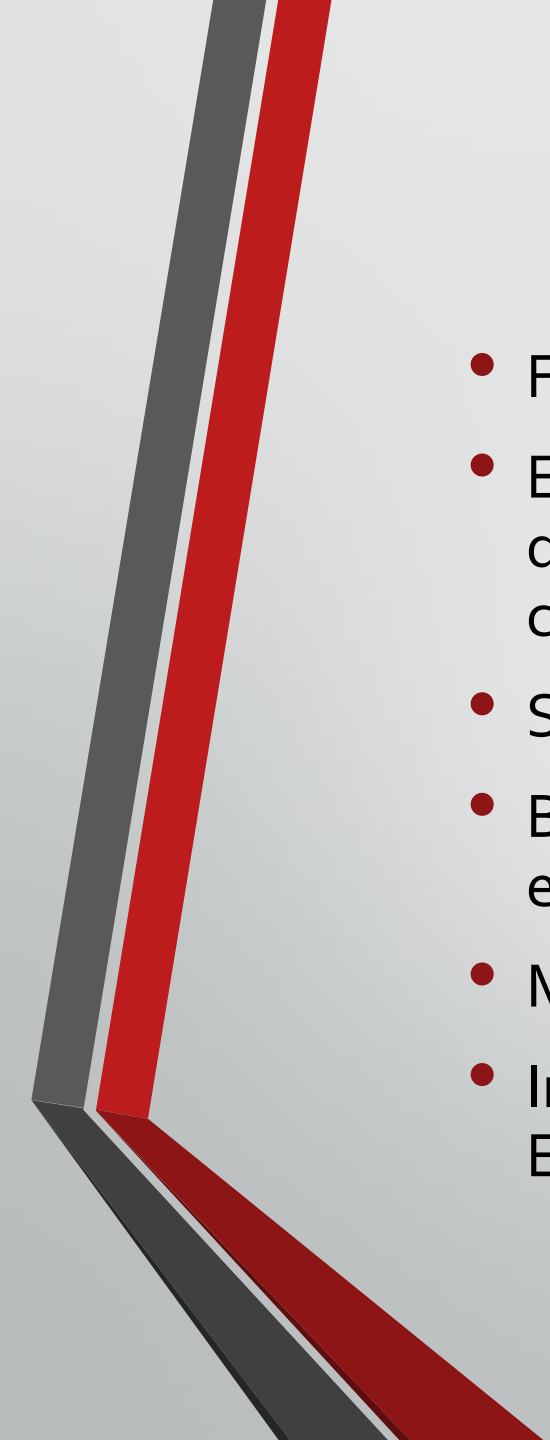


High Quality Curriculum Development

- Is Rigorous and Relevant
- Engages and Empowers
- Focuses on Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Yields Comprehension and Achievement
- Integrates ELA Strands and Meets Common Core State Standards
- Utilizes Best Practices

Socratic Seminars

- Engage students in Socratic dialogue, providing rich classroom discourse
- Equip students with critical thinking skills for the 21st century
- Prepare students with college and career readiness skills
- Improve performance, academic achievement, comprehension, collaboration and problem solving abilities
- Provide a scaffolded critical thinking session where each student can engage at their own level
- Effectively integrate the ELA strands of the CCSS by combining formal dialogue with close reading and exact writing



Text-Based Collaborative Learning— A Research-Based Best Practice

- Focuses on reading and writing with **discussion** as the bridge
- Exposes readers to cognitive and conceptual confusion; thus, forcing discussants to resolve the disequilibrium by working to explore connections and assimilate new ideas
- Students articulate and support views with evidence from the text
- Brain-compatible because the brain is social; complex learning is enhanced by challenge; and the search for meaning is innate
- Moves learning to Depth of Knowledge Level 3 and Level 4
- Improves literacy by implementing recommendations #3 and #4 in Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices (IES Practice Guide)

What is a Socratic Seminar?

- Disciplined, formal dialogue about text
- A conversation about text for the purpose of finding meaning and interpreting the author
- A means of examining a problem or a question
- An opportunity to think critically
- An opportunity to present discussion as the context for comprehension
- An opportunity for the teacher to become a facilitator and for the students to do the work of thinking about and finding evidence in the text

Seminar Roles

The Leader ...

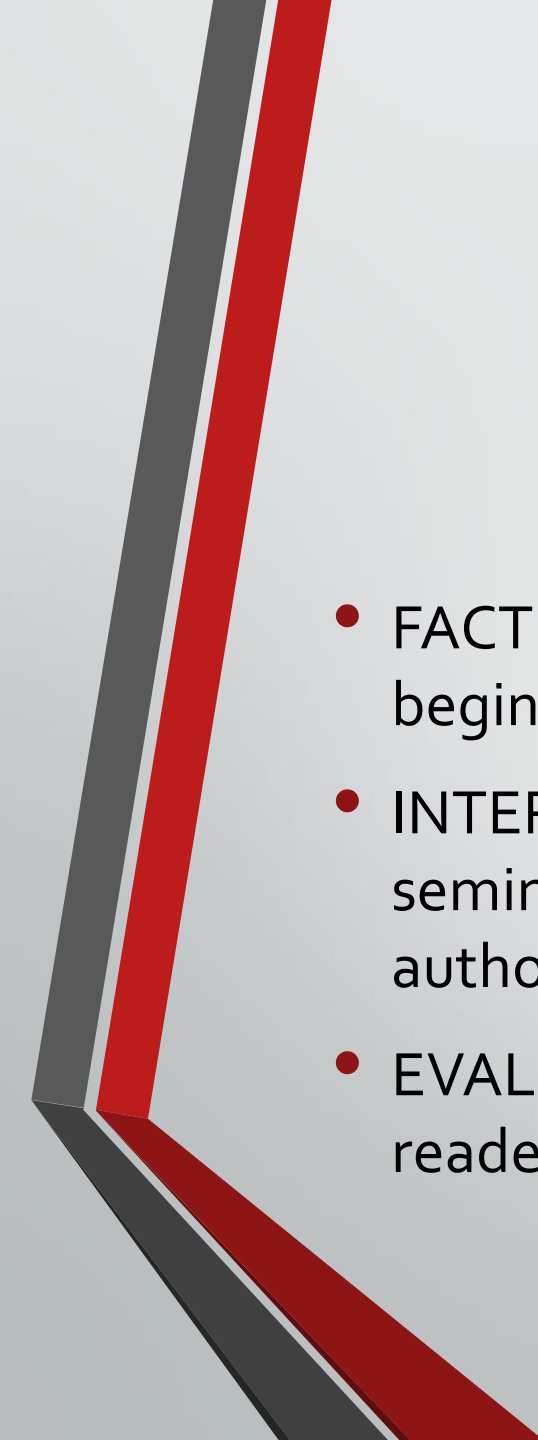
- ...poses questions
- ...asks for evidence from the text
- ...asks "Why?"
- ...asks for clarification
- ...probes for meaning

The Participants ...

- ...answer questions
- ...provide evidence from the text
- ...answer "Why?"
- ...clarify
- ...find meaning

Seminar Procedures

- We sit in a circle or oval. This says the dialogue is important and everyone is a part of the discussion and needs to see everyone else.
- You may talk when you hear a pause in the conversation.
- Everyone reads the selection twice with a pencil in order to participate.
- Do not introduce outside opinions or texts not read by the group.
- The leader sits in the circle to record and facilitate the conversation.
- The leader may not answer the question posed for discussion.
- Sequence: Read selection once and clarify what happened with fact questions. Leader poses seminar question. Read selection again. Write initial answers to question. Hold seminar discussion. Write answer to question after discussion. May share evaluation or opinion afterward.



Three Types of Questions and their Use with Seminars

- FACT questions are used to check for basic understanding. Use before beginning the seminar.
- INTERPRETIVE questions are used to find meaning in the text during the seminar. These are the questions that will allow us to “climb inside the author’s head.” This is where the emphasis lies in seminar discussions.
- EVALUATION questions may be used after the seminar to determine the readers’ opinion on the topic or to make connections with the topic.

Sample Seminar Questions

- Folktale *Stone Soup*: Who is more dishonest, the old woman or the man who comes to her door?
- Fairy Tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*: Why does the author have a child be the one who tells us the truth about the emperor's clothes?
- Short story *Harrison Bergeron*: Why does the author have Harrison revolt with a ballerina by dancing?
- Novel *The View from Saturday*: Is there a leader among The Souls?
- Novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*: What is the author trying to say about parenting through her character Atticus Finch?